97-84122-14

Scandrett, Richard B.

An adventure in neighborliness

[S.l.]

[1934]

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Scandrett, Richard B
An adventure in neighborliness, a short address by Richard B. Scandrett, jr. at a dinner given at the Waldorf Astoria on April 16th, 1934 in honor of the crew of the New York-Moscow recognition trade flight ... Broadcast over station W.C.R. [1934]
8 p.

369990

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TECHNICAL MICROFORM DATA

FILM SIZE: 35mm REDUCTION RATIO: 10:1 IMAGE PLACEMENT: IA (IIA) IB IIB

DATE FILMED: 6/26 INITIALS: JLM

TRACKING # : MSH 25044.

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An Adventure In Neighborliness

A Short Address by

RICHARD B. SCANDRETT, JR.

At a Dinner Given at the

WALDORF ASTORIA

ON APRIL 16TH, 1934

IN HONOR OF
THE CREW OF THE

NEW YORK-MOSCOW
RECOGNITION TRADE FLIGHT

WILLIAM H. ALEXANDER
WILLIAM C. BROOKS
JOHN FITKALO
ARTHUR FINCH
CHARLES HEALY DAY

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▼

Broadcast over Station W.O.R.

AN ADVENTURE IN NEIGHBORLINESS

Captain Alexander, members of your crew, Mr. Brooks, Mr. Fitkaio, and Mr. Finch, and members of the Committee who have made possible the carrying out of this fine idea which Captain Alexander has conceived:

Toward the accomplishment of this flight, Captain Alexander has worked with enthusiasm and ardor in the face of what have, at times, appeared to be insurmountable difficulties.

We are here tonight to honor Bill Alexander and his intrepid companions and to give them our moral support and encouragement in the great adventure in neighborliness upon which they plan to embark. They expect to take off from New York in June on the first cargo bearing transoceanic airplane flight. Their plane will fly from New York to Moscow, via Bermuda and the Azores. I shall not attempt to describe to you the plane in which they will fly or the cargo which they will carry. I shall leave that to Bill Alexander, who is much better qualified to talk about that than I am.

I first knew Bill Alexander fifteen years ago, when I was a student aviator in the Navy at Pensacola, Florida, and he was then teaching student aviators to fly the largest planes then being flown. Those planes would look very small today if placed beside the giant ship which he intends to fly to Moscow. I can vouch for Bill as a great air man. He was one of our leading fliers when Colonel Lindbergh and Al Williams were learning to fly. As a matter of fact, he helped to teach Al Williams to fly. Since the Wright Brothers flew at Kitty Hawk, he has lived and thought aviation. His heart is an aviator's heart; his mind, an aviator's mind; and his soul, an aviator's soul.

On the first lap of his flight to Moscow, he will fly a familiar route, for in 1930 he was the pilot on the first flight from New York to Bermuda, on which flight he brought down his plane at

dusk outside the harbor and spent the night with his plane on the ocean. The next morning he took off from the water and came down safely in the harbor. Last summer he flew from New York to Nome, to bring Jimmy Mattern back after he had been rescued in Siberia on his round-the-world flight.

The flight from New York to Moscow has been named the "Recognition Trade Flight". Its purpose is to further demonstrate that the two largest republics in the world are good neighbors. It may well be called a great adventure in neighborliness, for to the aviator, Moscow and New York are today nearer together physically than New York and Philadelphia were in 1776, when we became the United States of America.

When, last fall, the United States of America with a start of surprise recognized the existence of Soviet Russia, we aviators smiled, for we had known and been on intimate terms for years with the aviators of the U.S.S.R. American aviators have been long familiar with the very important contributions which the aviators of the U.S.S.R. have been making during the past decade to the cause of aviation. Several years ago I had the privilege of helping to entertain the Russian fliers who paused for a too-brief visit in New York on their memorable and successful round-the-world flight. I remember speaking at a dinner given in their honor at that time and commenting then on the amazing strides which in their relative seclusion, they had made with little co-operation from the rest of a too-suspicious world.

Now that our countries are again officially on speaking terms, there has been lighted anew a warm flame in the hearts of all lovers of peace. For the corner stone of peace is understanding, and the basis of understanding is friendly intercourse. It is very clear that there can be little basis for understanding between two great peoples who do not recognize the existence of each other's governments. There can be little doubt that the *people* of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics and the *people* of the United States of America desire world peace. As nations go, we are a very young nation, little more than 150 years old, and that is a

relatively short time in the life of a nation. Those wise and far-sighted statesmen who founded our government had faith in the future and a practical understanding of men. But I doubt if they knew how well they builded. I doubt whether they foresaw the great cultural and material structure which was to be built so quickly on the firm foundation which they made. Theirs was a new ideology in government, *of* the people, *for* the people, and *by* the people. They aimed to create a new kind of state where men and women would have equality of opportunity. Their ideology was viewed with great suspicion by the rulers and the ruling classes of the then established nations of the world. It was regarded as an impracticable experiment in government, and the statesman of Europe scoffed. Their ideas were, of course, not new. The great Frenchman, de Montesquieu, and the expressed views of other great political philosophers, influenced the thinking of the framers of our Constitution, but their bold resolve to incorporate these theretofore theroetical ideas into an actual government was indeed the blazing of a new trail. From the standpoint of Europe, they set up what to that generation purported to be a classless state, and in comparison with the existing oligarchies, the new United States of America was an experiment which invested ultimate authority in the people themselves. That it has succeeded has been the miracle of both the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. We can now appreciate that the desire of our leaders to create a new state released political ability and a depth of governmental philosophy which has won the admiration of all later generations. Although there are still many who believe that a republican form of government has not yet proved itself, I think that our system has shown a flexibility which has made it more provable today than it was in its beginning. Washington understood, better than the people whom he fathered, that the basis of the new state was fundamentally different. But his faith was not a blind faith. He understood better than most of his compatriots the practical pitfalls which might destroy the new republic. At the end of our revolution, he was in a position to teach by his example,

and he availed himself of his opportunity. That he could have become king of the new nation and modeled it after the then established nations of the world, there is little room for doubt. but he realized that he had led a revolution the purpose of which was far greater than independence from the parent country, that it had been much more a revolution for independence from the ideology of the old world. Although there are some phases of striking similarity between the birth of our republic and of the birth, over a hundred years later, of the Soviet Republic, there is no implication to be drawn from these similarities that we have similar forms of government. The resumption of diplomatic relations carries with it no assumption that our people want a communistic state. The basis of mutual recognition is that each of the governments has agreed to respect scrupulously the indisputable right of the other to order its own life within its own jurisdiction in its own way and to refrain from interfering in any manner in the internal affairs of the other.

In the brief period of our existence as an independent nation, we have achieved an economic position which makes us remarkably self-sufficient in regard to natural resources and manufacturing capacity. But our further industrial progress and the development of our standards of living depend, to an important degree, upon foreign trade. It directly affects our purchasing power, our unemployment situation and the preservation of our institutions. There is increasingly convincing evidence that nationalism and capitalism are really antagonistic, and that nationalism, when it aims to achieve a self-contained nation, seriously restricts the field in which capitalism can operate, and that the two are, therefore, in conflict. The resumption of normal diplomatic relations between the United States of America and the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics, whose combined populations aggregate 290,000,000, was an event of the most significant importance. For sixteen years the relations between the two countries had been an anomalous one. It had been like Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Jones, living next door to each other, sitting in adjoining seats at con-

certs, meeting at the dinner table of mutual acquaintances, and all the time raising their lorgnettes, and with that very human perversity to which at one time or another we are all unfortunately subject, stubbornly refusing to admit that the other exists. Happily now, Dr. Roosevelt has opened Mrs. Jones' eyes and the two ladies have discovered each other and their mutual interests, and have developed already a mutual respect. During this sixteen years of mutual blindness, however, when there have been no diplomatic relations between the two countries, there has been an accumulation in this country of incorrect and false ideas and notions regarding the state of affairs and conditions of life in the U.S.S.R. This has probably also been true to a lesser extent in respect to the ideas about this country which are held by the people of the U.S.S.R. Some people have engaged themselves in spreading in this country wild stories of the Soviet Union, and it is true that there are many people here who have what Alexander Woolcott has aptly called an "arduous credulity" which lures them into believing stories without any real evidence. But opinions founded upon rumors can change quickly, and the friendly attitude of our people toward Russia today is one of rapidly develping understanding. To further develop this understanding is the purpose of this flight.

World peace is dependent upon orderly international cooperation. Such cooperation can only be founded upon the voluntary and mutually advantageous exchange of goods, services and ideas. That there will be an unusual opportunity for such exchange between the United States and the U.S.S.R. is obvious In sixteen years, the U.S.S.R. has grown into a powerful industrial country, using technical methods and machinery, much of it the most modern in the world, and predominantly American. Russia has the necessary natural riches for much further growth, and in spite of the progressively increasing production of its own industry, it has not attempted to enclose its market within an artificial barrier of economic seclusion. It has great capacity for absorbing the raw materials and products of other countries. That this capacity is

increasing rapidly is best illustrated by the circumstances that its population has actually increased by 35,000,000 during the past ten years. This increase is attributable both to the general rise in cultural level, and to the success of the government's health program. This health program has cut the general pre-revolution mortality by 40%, and has cut the child mortality in half. It seems to me to be even more significant than its industrial progress, to realize that, before the Revolution, the child mortality was 270 per thousand, and that it is now 135 per thousand. Of equal significance is the reliable information that instead of the 8,000,000 children in school before the Revolution, there are now 26,000,000. If the present government of the U.S.S.R. had accomplished nothing else than this in its short life of sixteen years, it has clearly justified itself.

Nations are like individuals; they are suspicious of each other. And like individuals, their suspicions increase or diminish as they become better acquainted and in direct proportion to the real justification for the suspicion. The people of the United States and the people of Canada know each other well and their natural suspicion is negligible. The good will in our relations with Mexico has increased incalculably since Ambassador Morrow helped to make us better acquainted. In the past decade, we have come more intimately to know our Latin American neighbors, and we are happier in improved relationships.

For more than 150 years we have been demonstrating the advantages of a republican form of government. In the course of time, we have uncovered some defects, have cured some of them, and are still trying to cure others. No thoughtful man believes that our government has reached perfection. But we believe that it is the best form of government for us, and we like to believe that other governments in the world have been influenced by our success and been led to emulate some of the ideas which we have developed. In the past, we have produced our Lincolns, our Franklins, our Marshalls. They have been the best proof of the vitality and greatness of our culture. For a culture is vital and

great if it creates great individuals. If it creates only individualists, its situation is precarious. For an individualist derives his status only through what he takes from others, and uses for himself, but the individual achieves greatness through what he contributes to others, without loss to himself. With this in mind, it has been suggested that there must be a reduction in the premium which our individualistic age has placed upon consumers goods. Perhaps in the Russian laboratory we may be able to perceive something in this direction which can be made helpful to us in working out our own problem.

The U.S.S.R. is a young nation. Its government is much younger than ours. But the people of Russia have a strong faith, and they have found in their proletariat immense reserves of executive ability which have made government by her communistic party possible. It would be strange indeed if there were not lessons for us to learn voluntarily from them, as the rest of world in the past has learned from us.

There can be little question of the gain to both countries from the restoration of economic cooperation between them. The way to such cooperation has been opened by the resumption of normal diplomatic relations. But even more important, not only to the two countries but to humanity as a whole, is the possibility of their united effort in the great work of preserving peace. For, with all his brilliant accomplishments in the field of diplomacy, it is apparent to all who have followed the career of their Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Litvinoff, that the cause which most fires his imagination and commands his highest loyalty is the cause of World peace. It seems to me to be a matter of the utmost significance that the U.S.S.R. should have chosen him as their spokesman in dealing with the other nations of the world, and that it was largely through his efforts that our two countries should have found the way to recognize that they each have a part in the Society of Nations.

This flight which Captain Alexander will make in June is intended as a gesture of good will. I have no doubt that it will

prove to be an additional significant and important tie to further cement the already cordial relations between the two countries. We salute you, Captain Alexander, and look forward with confidence to the safe accomplishment of your mission. We have welcomed the opportunity to be associated with you. When you take off from Floyd Bennett Field in June, we shall be there to wish you a safe journey and bid you "Do Svidania"!

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